

# Change The Prompt!

Making the HSE More Relevant for  
ABE Students



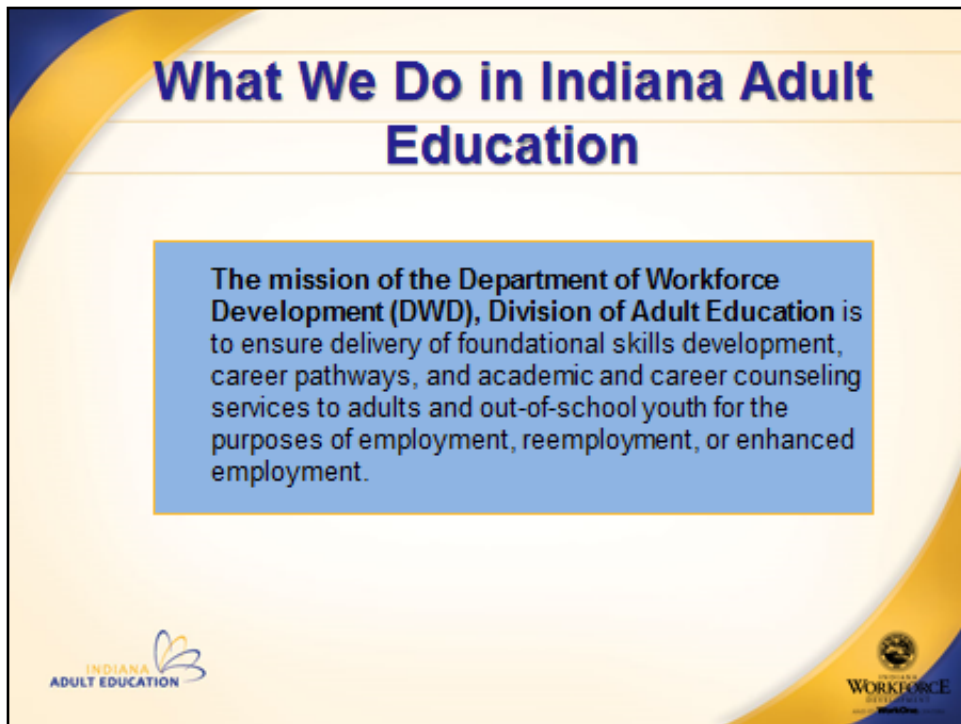
# Who am I ?

## **Dan DeVers**

17 Years Experience as an ABE Teacher and Adult Education Program Coordinator From the State of Indiana

5 Years Experience as Indiana State Adult Education Coordinator, Department of Workforce Development





In Indiana, Adult Education is somewhat different than other states. It is housed within the Department of Workforce Development. Therefore, we have been implementing many of the new WIOA requirements for some time.

## What We Do in Indiana Adult Education

- **College ready preparation and remediation**
  - Remediation available for Accuplacer, ASVAB, WorkKeys and TOEFL
  - Helps students avoid costly remedial classes
- **Entry level career certification – WorkIN**
  - Short term entry level certifications
- **HSE remediation and testing**
  - Students who do not graduate – continued engagement
  - Fast Track classes



Besides preparing students to take the HSE, Indiana has worked diligently to help students enter the workforce through the WorkINdiana Program. WorkINdiana is bridge program for IN AE students that covers training and supportive services costs for students to complete approved short-term, post-secondary training which results in industry recognized credentials in high-demand industries.

This is especially important for those students who may find it difficult to pass the HSE test, but still need to obtain gainful employment. We also work closely with state colleges to help prepare students to pass college entrance tests.

# Who are you ?



ADMINISTRATOR



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INVESTMENT ACT

# Why Do Students Typically Come To Class?





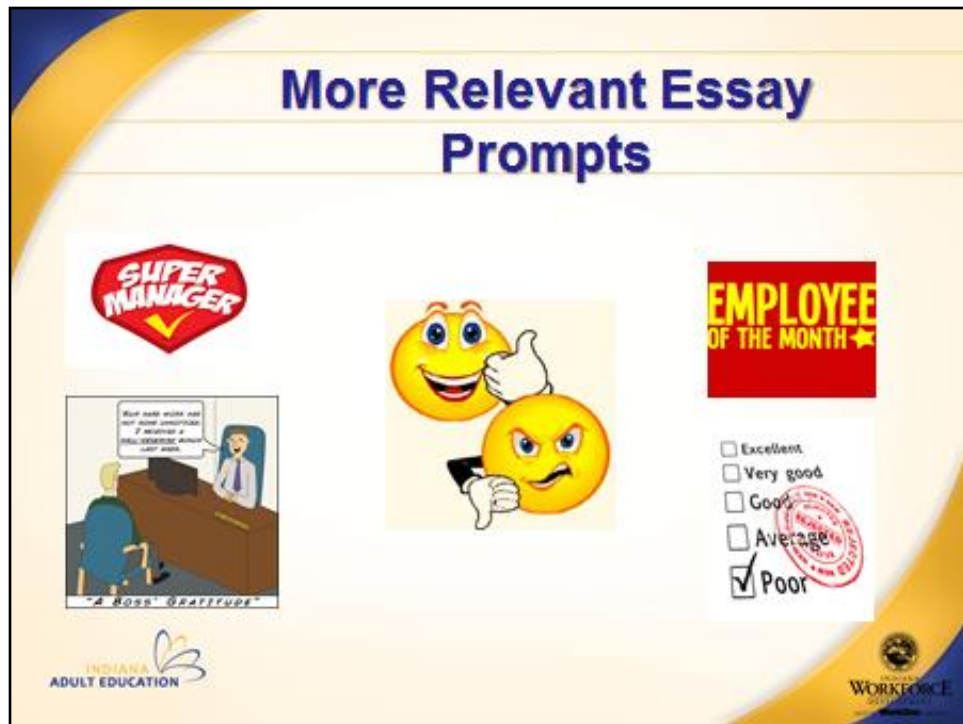
Current State:

Typically, students need to pass the HSE in order to find employment or get a better job. This is their primary interest in taking ABE classes. Although, all *academics* are important for success in any endeavor, integration of employability skills and real life context need to occur. Not only will students better relate to the academic material, but also, they will be better prepared to enter the workforce. Academics become more Relevant!

Easier said than done? Yes, it can be!!!

Question: How does a teacher, who is a novice in implementing employability skills, easily start this integration.

Answer: Start with the Essay and "Change the Prompt!"



Future State:

The teacher can introduce topics which may address a wider scale of interest:

Most everyone one has had some type of job whether paid or unpaid. With topics such as these, students can bring in personal experience coupled with information given by the teacher or researched. Discussions may be more relevant, thus meaningful. Here, not only writing is addressed, but also employability skills.



Example Questions/Topics: What make for a good manager/employee? What are characteristics of a bad manager/employee?



# WIOA and Adult Education

❖ **Key Changes in Adult Education/English Language Services**

- ✓ Sharper focus on transitions to postsecondary education, employment and training
- ✓ Support for career pathways, integrated education and training, and other promising approaches
- ✓ **Greater alignment with partners through comprehensive planning, performance accountability, and the one-stop system**



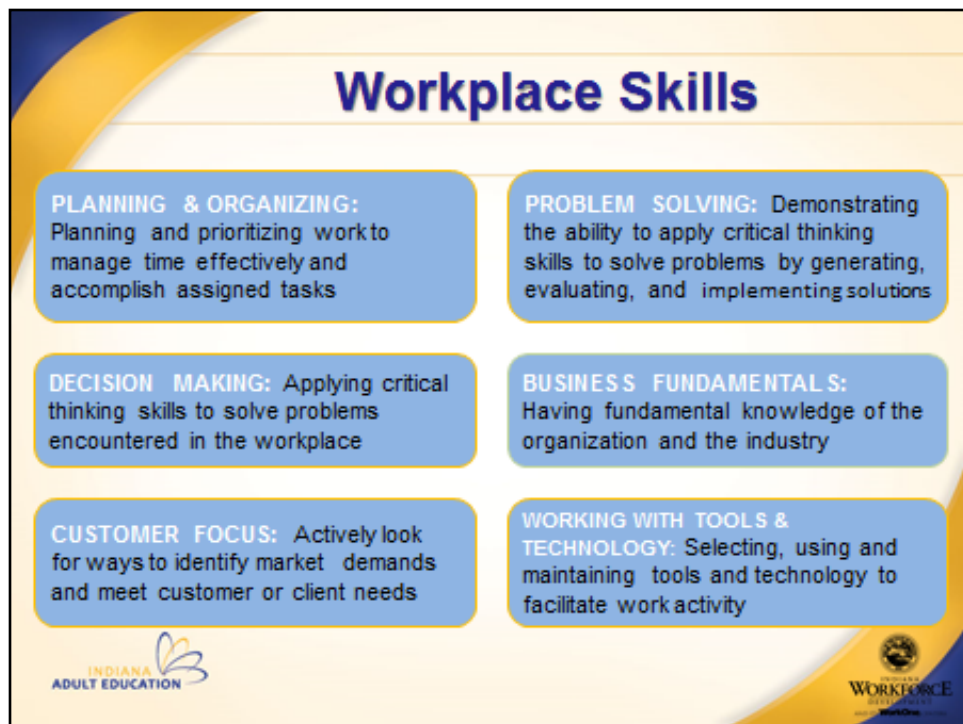
This change in prompt aligns with OCTAE and WIOA's new focus, which requires teachers to incorporate employability/soft skills into current curriculum. This makes sense because most students come to AE classroom because they need a job. In order to obtain these jobs, they need to increase their academic skills to pass the HSE or enter post secondary school. However, what students and teachers may not know is: Most employers' greatest concern is employees lack many employability skills (soft skills). Examples are: Communication skills – written and verbal – teamwork, and independent work

Focusing on Employability Skills through essay writing and oral communication is an approach I took in my Adult Education classroom.



These are many of the employability skills set forth by OCTAE. Currently AE classes focus primarily on Applied Knowledge; however, classrooms need to also incorporate the 3 additional areas into curriculum. These areas may be currently addressed in classrooms; however, students and teachers may not be making connections with how the skills addressed in class align with the workplace. Therefore, how do we create stronger links between applied knowledge and other employability skills?

One easy solution is to incorporate these skills into HSE essay prompts and follow up with Socratic discussion, which will include elements of speech communication.




Since ABE teachers already have a strong understanding of Applied skills, I chose to look more closely at the three other Employability Skills sections and see how they could be addressed in the HSE essay preparation I was doing with my adult learners. The first of those three areas is Workplace Skills.


# Addressing Work Place Skills in the Essay

**Topic:**  
We All Have Transferrable Skills

**Learning Objective:**  
To aid student in identifying their own transferrable skills

**Workplace Skills Addressed:**  
PLANNING & ORGANIZING - DECISION MAKING-  
PROBLEM SOLVING

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I started the process of writing a workplace skills essay by choosing a topic such as *Transferrable Skills*.



# Addressing Work Place Skills in the Essay

**Lesson Topic:** We All Have Transferable Skills

**Learning Objective:** To aid students in identifying their own transferable skills

**Materials Needed:** Copy of the chapter from Book Five of Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do, and the Reading Guide for Jesusita Navarro.

**SCANS Competencies:** Basic Skills: Reading Information: Acquire and evaluate information Thinking Skills: Creative thinking

Distribute Lesson 4: We All Have Transferrable Skills and the short story by Jesusita Navarro

(The entire lesson will be passed out; however, not much time will be spent on it.) I located a lesson in focusing on Workplace/Transferrable Skills, which you have a copy of. You can see that it seamlessly addresses the SCANS competencies: Reading Information, Acquire and evaluate information, Creative writing (Applied Skills) along with the employability skills.

Now, let's take a look at the activity I modified for use in class.

## Addressing Work Place Skills in the Essay

The title of the reading is "Just a Housewife."

Guiding questions:

1. What do you think the author means by "just a housewife"? What does a housewife do?
2. Does a housewife do "work"?
3. Ask students to discuss then brainstorm a list of the skills that Jesusita has. These might include: • Managing her time • Organizing activities and people • Cleaning • Running a household • Staying within a budget • Helping people make decisions.



### Activity:

After reading the short narrative about being a housewife by Jesusita Novarro, students will work together to answer questions related to the skills (which are validly transferrable to the workplace) needed to be a good housewife. These questions can be found on the Activity Handout. - *My students enjoyed this activity immensely. They shared personal experiences and were amazed how basic, everyday skills like managing a check book and planning a car pool could translate to the workplace.*

## Addressing Work Place Skills in the Essay

4. What are some of the things that you do that you don't get paid for?

This might include organizing a bake sale at your child's school, coaching a sports team, planning a birthday party, volunteering at homeless shelters and literacy groups

- Note that these are called "transferable skills" – skills that can be used in many different situations, whether for paid work or not.



This final question moves the activity from the reading questions to the students' personal experiences. As we review the guiding questions of this Work Place activity, you will see that there is a strong focus on brainstorming and outlining, which are excellent strategies to better prepare students not only for the writing process but also for enhancing Socratic discussion/Speech communication.



Initial Teacher response to this activity: "This doesn't seem different than what I have been already doing in class".

Answer: "Correct! You have only Changed the Prompt!" which allows for a seamless introduction to Employability Skills.

## Begin the Essay Writing Process

Students can research a job or career that garners their interest. As they do so, they must determine the types of transferrable skills that are necessary. An example essay may be: "The Pro and Cons of Becoming a Teacher: Do I Possess the Qualities Needed?"

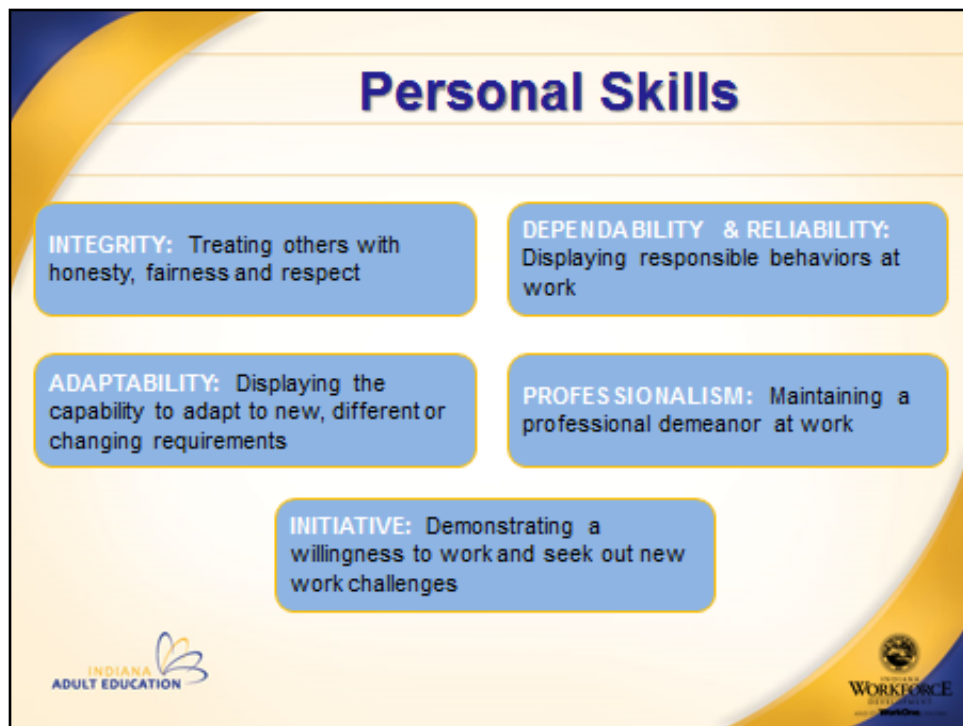
**Transferrable Teacher Skills:** Active Listening – Coordination- Judgement and Decision Making – Monitoring – Management – Speaking – Writing – Reading Comprehension

After completing the activities above, I asked students to begin the process of writing their Employability Skills essay.

They could research a career of their choice. They then had to determine the transferrable skills needed. Here is an example for a teacher. Although they may not yet have all the academic skills needed, students can still look at the qualities that a teacher must possess and determine if he or she has the transferrable skills needed. For example: Is the student an active listener? Does he or she have good reading comprehension? Would they be comfortable monitoring? Once the Pros and Cons are determined, students can write an essay which determines if teaching might be a good choice. Here teachers are not only teaching how to research and develop an essay, but they have just taken on an extra professional title – Job Coach/Career Councilor without adding additional work to their plate. (Now you can add an additional skill to your LinkedIn profile!) - *Once I changed the prompt to reflect real world skills and challenges, I found my students to be more motivated in the writing process because they were allowed to research and write about something in which they had a personal interest. Also, they could reflect upon skills they didn't even know they had and how they relate to the world of work.*







Next I looked at the second grouping of employability skills – Personal Skills to see how they could be addressed with the Employability Skills Essay.

## Addressing Personal Skills In the Essay

**Topic:**  
We All Have Transferrable Skills

**Learning Objective:**  
To aid student in identifying their own personal skills

**Personal Skills Addressed:**  
INTEGRITY- DEPENDABILITY & RELIABILITY –  
PROFESSIONALISM – INITIATIVE

After students wrote and typed their essays (which addresses the Workplace skills of digital literacy), I asked them to read them aloud. With a predetermined rubric, other students in the class not only assessed the academic quality of the essay, but also demonstrated Integrity, Professionalism, and Initiative through the use of constructive criticism. - *I ask my students to read their essays whenever they are ready to do so. At first, I thought many students might not want to do this and that those scoring may not pay attention or take it seriously; however, I quickly found the opposite! The students were excited to present and the listeners/scorers were extremely constructive and respectful. Although I was happy to see this process work, I didn't truly understand the meaningfulness of changing the prompt and implementing Work Place skills into the writing process until I had one student, who had been absent for some time, stop me during class to tell me he hadn't read his essay. I immediately passed out the rubric. He read his essay; the class scored; he got immediate feedback. All this happened within five to six minutes. Not only did the student demonstrate Workplace Skills, but he also exhibited a great amount of pride and accomplishment.*

Thus far, my Employability Skills Essay Assignment has addressed Applied, Workplace and Personal skills utilizing one activity/lesson. Now for the final skill, People.





These skills should look familiar! They align closely with Personal skills. Teamwork and Respect align closely with Integrity and Professionalism.

# Addressing People Skills in the Essay

**Topic:**  
We All Have Transferrable Skills

**Learning Objective:**  
To aid student in identifying their own people skills

**Personal Skills Addressed**  
Teamwork – Communication – Respect



Let's go back to our essay... while having students evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of others' essays through the predetermined rubric - **respect and teamwork** are addressed as well as verbal/speech communications skills. Everyone worked together as a team to create a better product....much like peer coaching/teaching. Both Personal and People Skills are addressed simultaneously.

Sample Rubric						
Scoring Rubric for Oral Essay Presentations:						
PRESENCE	5	4	3	2	1	0
-body language & eye contact						
-poise						
LANGUAGE SKILLS	5	4	3	2	1	0
-correct usage						
-appropriate vocabulary and grammar						
-understandable						
-spoken loud enough to hear easily						
ORGANIZATION	5	4	3	2	1	0
-clear objectives						
-logical structure						
OVERALL IMPRESSION	5	4	3	2	1	0
-very interesting / very boring						
-pleasant / unpleasant to listen to						
-very good / poor communication						
						____ / 20

An example of integrating academic and work place skills via a single rubric.

#### Presenter/Employee:

**Work Place skills addressed:** Verbal communication skills; presence, which is imperative in the interview process; written communications skills; organization; self confidence; professionalism; independence

#### Scorer/Employer:

**Work Place skills addressed:** Respect; communication - listening; initiative; decision making; professionalism; integrity; business fundamentals

# Employability Essay Topics

Teacher Created – Muncie Area Career Center

- Hard work vs natural talent in the Workplace
- Self discipline in the workplace
- Work ethics – Good employee Traits
- Employee dependability
- Controlling emotions in the workplace
- Dependability in the workplace
- Managing your anger in the workplace
- Communication in the workplace
- Oral communication skills at work

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**Conclusion:** Employability Essays do not necessarily take the place of all HSE topics – they are to be used to enhance a student’s motivation through meaningful research and writing examples which help them to not only persist in their academic endeavors, but also to obtain skills needed to enter and retain employment.

# Questions



# Primary Sources

## Integrating Career Awareness

[http://amplifyee.org/files/upload/filename/174/Curriculum\\_Guide.pdf](http://amplifyee.org/files/upload/filename/174/Curriculum_Guide.pdf)

## Jesuita Novarro Story

[www.sabesfiles.org/msoffice/cor/esol-just-a-housewife.docx](http://www.sabesfiles.org/msoffice/cor/esol-just-a-housewife.docx)

## CTE Employability Skills Framework

<http://cte.ed.gov/employabilityskills/>

## “Expanding the Purposes of AE under WIOA”

<http://sites.ed.gov/octae/2015/05/20/wioa-a-vision-to-revitalize-the-workforce-system/>





# Thank You!

Dan DeVers: [ddevers@dwd.in.gov](mailto:ddevers@dwd.in.gov)

